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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KOLKATA 000263

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS, INR, INR/B

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PARM](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [ETTC](#) [TSPL](#) [PGOV](#) [EIND](#) [SENV](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: A FOURTH INDUSTRIAL RADIOGRAPHY CAMERA GOES MISSING IN INDIA

REF: LOWE-KUO EMAILS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: On August 27, an industrial radiography camera containing radioactive iridium 192 was stolen from Tata Steel's manufacturing plant in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, the fourth such theft since August 2005. The first camera theft occurred on August 14, 2005 from the Industrial Radiography Agency in Mumbai. On November 5, 2006, a camera was stolen from the premises of Gujarat National Fertilizer Corporation Limited in Bharuch, Gujarat. In April 2007, a third industrial camera was stolen from Indo-Gulf Fertilizer Ltd. in Jagdishpur, Uttar Pradesh. Police have not recovered any of the cameras and have been unable to ascertain the motive behind the thefts. Embassy will raise our concerns with the GOI and suggests further inquiry from Washington offices to their Indian counterparts per appropriate channels. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On the morning of 27 August, Tata Steel officials discovered the disappearance of an industrial radiography camera which had been stored in a sealed underground pit on the company premises. The camera was used to detect wear and tear of plant equipment and had been in use as recently as the evening of August 25. Biswajit Sarkar, head of the Jamshedpur-based General Industrial Inspection Bureau, which owns the camera, told Post that the lock on the sealed pit had been broken open and the camera removed. However, Sarkar said that only the main camera body (containing the iridium 192) was stolen. The attachments, including the driving unit used to operate the camera via remote control, were left intact in the pit. According to Sarkar, the camera is harmful only if the case housing the 15 Curie of Iridium-192 is destroyed and the iridium is exposed. He said that it would be very difficult to break the casing -- the camera is designed to withstand a fall of 60 meters without breaking.

¶3. (SBU) Tata Steel officials registered a First Investigation Report (FIR) at the Bistupur police station in

Jamshedpur. Officials of the Atomic Energy Regulation Board, the organization that regulates the usage of radioactive isotopes, arrived in Jamshedpur on the evening of August 29. They will use survey meters and detection devices that may help in locating the stolen camera.

¶4. (SBU) A similar theft of an industrial camera occurred earlier this year. In the early hours of April 25, an industrial radiography camera containing 50 Curie of iridium 192 was stolen from the premises of the Indo-Gulf Fertilizer Company in Jagdishpur, Uttar Pradesh. Like the Tata incident, thieves broke open the seal of the underground pit where the camera was stored and made away with the camera and its driving unit. Within a day or two, the accessories of the camera were recovered from forest areas in the vicinity of the factory, but the main body of the camera still has not been recovered. The 50 Curie iridium 192 in that camera was "highly activated" at the time of the theft and the radiation emitted would be 2500 mR per hour per meter.

¶5. (SBU) Head of the northern region chapter of the National Association of Non-Destructive Testing Services Organization (NANSO) Utpal Ghosh informed Post that these are not the only two incidents of missing industrial cameras in recent years. On August 14, 2005 a camera owned by the Mumbai-based Industrial Radiography Agency, was stolen. Also, on November 5, 2006, a camera owned by IIS NDT and Allied Services Private Limited was stolen from the premises of Gujarat National Fertilizer Corporation Limited in Bharuch, Gujarat.

¶6. (SBU) NANSO official Ghosh told Post that his organization, which is an association of more than 500 Indian companies engaged in non-destructive testing services, is trying its best to impress upon GOI authorities the seriousness of these incidents. Frustrated and disappointed at the inability of Uttar Pradesh police to track down the culprits and recover the camera stolen from Indo-Gulf Fertilizers in the April 2007 case, NANSO has written to the Chairman of the Atomic Energy

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Regulatory Board and to Speaker of the Lok Sabha Somnath Chatterjee about the dangers of exposure to the radioactive material and the urgent need to recover the missing cameras. Ghosh said that in July, Chatterjee forwarded NANSO's letter to Minister for Home Affairs Shivraj Patil, urging him to take this matter seriously. Minister Patil instructed a Special Task Force to work closely with the UP police to recover the stolen camera. Ghosh said that his UP police contacts recently told him that they were very close to a break through in the case, but soon after this the key police investigating personnel were transferred. According to Ghosh, this has dealt a severe blow to the chances of recovering the camera.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: It is unclear whether these four incidents are the work of common thieves who have little idea of the dangers of exposure to radioactive material or of professionals seeking to use the radioactive elements for dirty bombs or other explosives. The potential damage caused by exposure to the iridium or by detonation of the material in an explosive is significant. Embassy New Delhi will raise our concerns with the GOI formally. We further recommend reactivating our Energy Department efforts to engage the Indian government in radioactive source protection efforts.

¶8. (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy New Delhi.
JARDINE